Research Notes: Gertrude Frances Healy Laughlin (1910 - 1948)

Research Overview:

Gertrude Frances Healy Laughlin died in Chicago in 1948 at the age of thirty-eight, shortly after cancer surgery. By that point, her health had been fragile for some time, and the conditions of her adult life—economic pressure, sustained responsibility, and the need to work outside the home—left little room for recovery or rest.

In January 1917, when Gertrude was seven years old, both of her parents died within weeks of each other. Her maternal uncles were already living in the household and assumed responsibility for the three sisters. The arrangement kept the family together, but the record is silent on how the loss was managed day to day, or how the responsibility for care was divided. What can be seen is continuity without commentary: the sisters remained in Chicago, attached to extended family, with the oldest sister, Mary, consistently appearing as the stabilizing figure in later years.

Gertrude married young and became the mother of two daughters. Like many families in Chicago at the time, her household depended on steady work and careful management, with little margin for error. She worked outside the home to help support her family, and her husband held jobs but struggled with alcoholism. At home, the problem was managed quietly. Gertrude warned her daughters not to play on a particular street, not because it was unsafe, but because they might see their father drinking in a bar in the afternoon.

By the time Gertrude was diagnosed with cancer, she was already unwell. Her sister Mary, deeply concerned, took out a life insurance policy on Gertrude so that Gertrude's two daughters would inherit $10,000 if she died. This was not a symbolic gesture but a calculated act of foresight, reflecting an understanding that Gertrude's illness might be terminal and that the children would need protection once she was gone.

On the morning after the operation, her daughters, Patricia and Dolores, accompanied by her sisters, Mary and Anne, went to the hospital to visit her. They were told they had just missed her. Gertrude had died suddenly from a blood clot. Dolores was thirteen years old. The record preserves the fact of

death, but it is this sequence—anticipation, arrival, shock—that marks the day as it was experienced by the women closest to her.

Gertrude's daughters were old enough to remember the day of her death, but too young to know her fully as a person. What remained was an absence that carried forward—no grandmother in the room, no one to consult or comfort, no presence in the moments that followed across their lives.

Speculative Narrative:

Intentionally left blank.

Time Line:

1 Jan 1910 - Birth at Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[1]

16 Jan 1910 - Baptism at Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[2]

Holy Name Cathedral - Sponsors: Patrick Lenahan and Mary Lenahan.

In the 1910 census, Michael Healy's household includes cousins Patrick Lanahan and John Lanahan.

1910 - US Census at Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[3]

Mike J Healey - head of household, male, white, age 38, married, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

James Brudell - brother, male, white, age 28, single, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Bernard Brudell - brother, male, white, age 24, single, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Patrick Lanahan - cousin, male, white, age 21, single, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

John Lanahan - cousin, male, white, age 21, single, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

John Healey - brother, male, white, age 36, single, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

[1] Gertrude Healy in the Cook County, Illinois, U.S., Birth Certificates Indexes 1871 - 1922

[2] Holy Name Cathedral (Chicago, Cook County, Illinois), Baptisms 1908 - 1915, p.42 Gertrude Healy, baptized 16 January 1910; digital image, "Illinois Catholic Church Records, 1833 - 1945," Family Search.

[3] "United States Census, 1910", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MKZZ-NKC: Thu Mar 07 02:20:15 UTC 2024), Entry for Mike J Healey and James Brudell, 1910.

The household reflects a crowded, kin-centered living arrangement, with extended family and nonrelatives sharing space, consistent with urban working-class life in Chicago at the time.

1 Jan 1917- Death of father Michael Healy (- 1917) at Chicago, Cook, Illinois. [4]

30 Jan 1917- Death of father Mary Cecelia Brudell (1868 - 1917) at Chicago, Cook, Illinois. [5]

Both parents died within the same month, leaving Gertrude and her sisters orphaned in the household they already occupied**.**

1920 - U.S. Census, at Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[6]

James Brudell - head, male, white, age 34, single, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Barney Brudell - brother, male, white, age 32, single, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Thomas Law, 8

Mary M Healy - niece, female, white, age 14, single, born Illinois, parents born Ireland

Anna G B Healy - niece, female, white, age 12, single, born Illinois, parents born Ireland

[4] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVVR-14WR: 24 May 2022), Michael Joseph Healy, ; Burial, Evanston, Cook, Illinois, United States of America, Calvary Catholic Cemetery; citing record ID 24596510, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[5] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVVR-14WT: 24 May 2022), Mary Cecelia Brudell Healy, ; Burial, Evanston, Cook, Illinois, United States of America, Calvary Catholic Cemetery; citing record ID 24596612, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[6] 1920 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Ward 21 Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, ED 1159, Sheet 7A, Dwelling 81, Family 107, James Brudell household; digital image, "1920 United States Federal Census, " Ancestry.

Gertrude Healy - niece, female, white, age 9, single, born Illinois, parents born Ireland

Michael J Brudell - brother, male, white, age 32, single, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Kato A Arthur, 55

Anna L Johnson, 23

CJ Chonka, 31

Gertrude Chonka, 23

The sisters appear as nieces rather than daughters

9 Nov 1929 - Marriage to John Arthur Laughlin at South Bend, Joseph, Indiana.[7]

According to family accounts, the marriage took place in Indiana because Gertrude's sisters did not approve of the match.

1930 - U.S. Census, at Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[8]

John A Laughlin, 20, head, living on 4042 Addison Street, born in Pennsylvania, chauffer

Gertrude Laughlin, 20, wife, born in Iowa, 19 at first marriage

Gertrude Laughlin, 50, mother, born in Iowa, widowed, parents born in Iowa, milliner at a millinery shop

Madalane Laughlin, 12, sister, born in Indiana, single, parents born in Iowa

[7] St. Joseph County (Indiana) Circuit Court, Marriage License Applications, Application No. 3760, John Arthur Laughlin to Gertrude Frances Healy, license dated 5 November 1929; St. Joseph County Circuit Court, South Bend, Indiana.

[8] 1930 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Chicago, Cook, Illinois, ED 1339, Sheet 10A, Dwelling 78, Family 162, John Arthur Laughlin household; digital image, "1930 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.

31 Oct 1930 - Birth of daughter Patricia Ann Laughlin (1930 - 1996) at Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[9]

14 Mar 1935 - Birth of daughter Dolores Joan Laughlin (1935 -2010) at Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[10]

1940 - U.S. Census, at Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[11]

John A Laughlin, 29, head, living on 4042 Addison Street, born in Pennsylvania, chauffer

Gertrude F Laughlin, 30**,** wife, born in Illinois, highest education 4th year of high school

Patricia A Laughlin, 9, daughter born in Illinois, 3rd grade

Deloris J Laughlin, 5, daughter, born in Illinois

13 Jul 1948 - Death at Chicago, Cook, Illinois **[12]**

"Gertrude Laughlin, the beloved wife of John, dear mother of Patricia Ann and Dolores, found the daughter of the late Michael and Mary Brudell Healy, sister of Mary Hopkinson and Anne Healy.

Funeral Thursday at 9:30 am from the funeral home, 3517 - 27 N. Pulaski Road to St. Viator's church. Interment Calvary, Independence 5800."

15 Jul 1948 - Burial at Calvary Cemetery at Evanston, Cook, Illinois.

[9] Cook County, Illinois Birth Index, 1916-1935, file no: 6048554, Patricia Laughlin, born 31 October 1930.

[10] Cook County (Illinois) County Clerk, Certificate of Birth, No. 10618, Dolores Laughlin, born 14 March 1935.

[11] 1940 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, ED 103-2474, Sheet 7B, Dwelling 193, John A Laughlin household; digital image, "1940 United States Federal Census, Ancestry.

[12] Illinois, Department of Public Health, Certificate of Death, Certificate 26998, Gertrude Frances Laughlin, died 13 July 1948, in Evanston, Cook County.